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Baptism Eucharist & Ministry

A Study Guide

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Robert L. Conrad



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Baptism, Eucharist & Ministry

By Robert L. Conrad

A Study Guide for use with *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* transmitted to the churches by the Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches at Lima, Peru in January, 1982.

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FOREWORD

This Study Guide was developed for use in study groups in the Lutheran Church by the Association of Evangelical Lutheran Churches.

For optimum benefit, each member of the study group should have a copy of *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*. This document is available from the Association of Evangelical Lutheran Churches, 12015 Manchester, St. Louis, MO, 63131. The price is 75 cents per copy.

Additionally, copies of the Bible, *Book of Concord* and the *Lutheran Book of Worship* should be available.

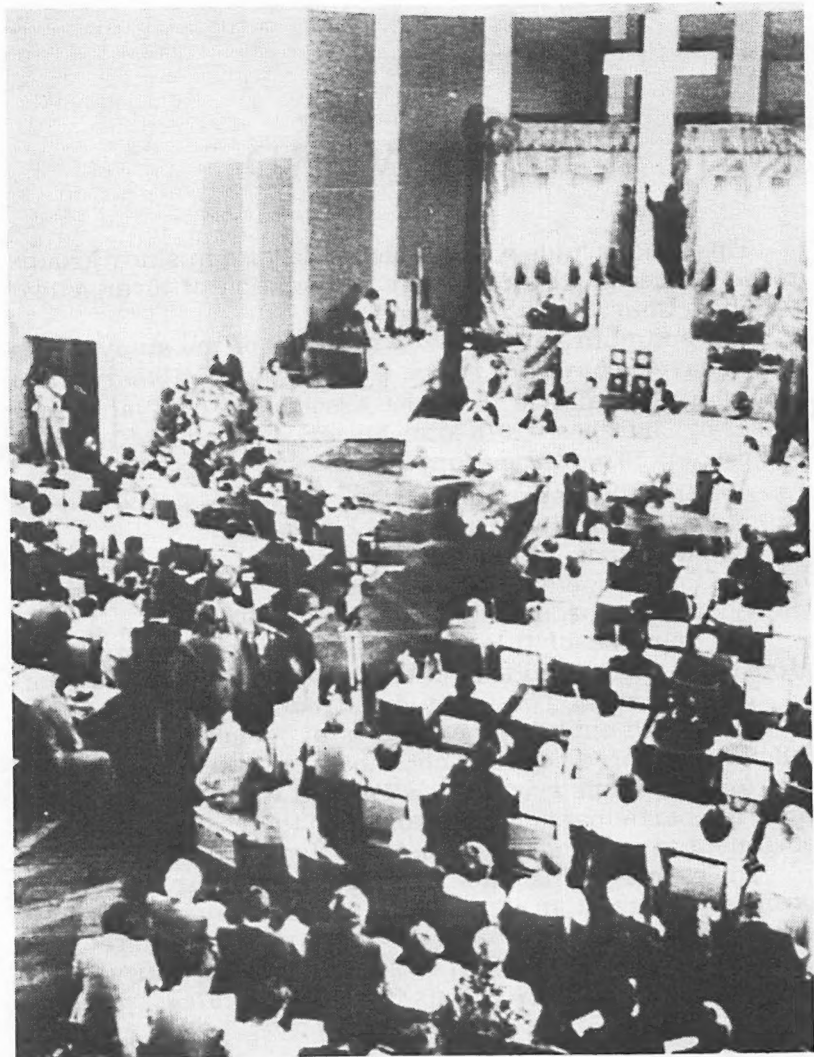
All quotations, unless otherwise indicated, are from the *Book of Concord*, edited and translated by Theodore Tappert (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1959).

The purpose of the study of *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* is the "reception" of the document by the churches.

The first session of this study introduces the group to the document and explains the process of "reception." That is followed by three sessions on Baptism, three on Eucharist and four on Ministry. The twelfth and final session allows time for participants to pull together their response to the document in order to share their opinions with the Church.

The author of this guide, Dr. Robert L. Conrad, has been professor of Christian education at Christ Seminary-Seminex since 1974 and director of its doctor of ministry degree program since 1980. He was professor of Christian education at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis from 1961 to 1974.

Robert H. Teuscher, editor



Delegates to the 1981 World Council of Churches Central Committee meeting in Dresden, East Germany, authorized the Faith and Order Commission to transmit to the churches the following year the document, "Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry."

SESSION ONE

Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry and Its Reception

(Reading: Preface to *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*, Pages 1-5)

I. Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry

The document, *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*, has been produced by the Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches. The commission is only one of 15 program sub-units of the World Council, but it is one of the oldest and most important units. As noted in the Preface (Page 1), the commission has been working for some fifty years to forge an agreement by the churches on Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry. It was felt that agreement on these three issues was vital to the unity of the churches. Obviously, these issues do not constitute the whole of the Church's confession, but they are a basic beginning. Many groups have had a hand in shaping the document in ecumenical dialogues at many levels over a long period of time. Now the agreement has reached the point where it should be considered by the churches. The discussion and dialogue must now become universal.

It is important to note what the document, *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*, does and does not claim to be. It claims to be an agreement on the three issues but it does not claim full consensus (Page 3). Full consensus in the faith and the life of the churches leads to visible unity. This document also does not claim to be a complete theological treatment on Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry. The agreed

text "concentrates on those aspects of the theme that have been directly or indirectly related to the problems of mutual recognition leading to unity (Page 4.)" The main text shows the major areas of theological agreement. The added commentaries indicate historical differences that have been overcome or areas that still need discussion and reconciliation. It is a remarkable agreement that is expressed in the main text since it involves such a wide spectrum of churches: Roman Catholic, Orthodox, Lutheran, Anglican, Reformed and many others. The inclusion of so many churches in the shaping of the document helps those who study it realize why it is so broadly ecumenical.

The final thing to note about the document, *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*, is that it claims to root itself in the Apostolic Tradition and express the faith of the Christian Church from its beginning. The "receiving" churches should not study the document merely from the standpoint of their own confession and accept or reject it on that basis. Lutherans, for instance, should not study it in order to criticize it by the standard of the Lutheran Confessions, but rather to determine whether or not the document demonstrates "the faith of the Church through the ages." Lutherans of course will want to lay their confessional statements alongside this document and note similarities and differences. The observation of similarities and differences should lead to reflection on how both *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* and the Lutheran Confessions demonstrate the faith of the Church through the ages, what guidance is offered to Lutherans by *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*, what guidance Lutherans can give to the Faith and Order Commission, and, finally, what openness to other churches is called for.

II. Reception

The Preface to *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* asks the churches "to enable the widest possible involvement of the whole people of God at all levels of church life in the spiritual process of receiving this text (Page 5)." This Study Guide is one tool for involvement of the whole people of God in such a process. It is designed to enable groups to read, discuss and criticize the document. But note that the churches are not simply to criticize but to "receive" the text. The request of the Faith and Order Commission for churches to "receive" the text is an historic first, a test case. The commission is not asking for approval but for reception. "Receiving" the text

means making it a part of the Church's faith and life. To facilitate that process the commission has included four questions for study groups to answer (Page 5). The first and third questions will be dealt with in each of the sessions of this study: 1) To what extent do you recognize in this text the faith of the Church through the ages? and 2) What guidance do you take from this text for the Church's worship, education, ethics, spiritual life and witness? In order to help answer those questions, each session will examine the text of *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*, scrutinize relevant Biblical material and relate the Lutheran Confessions and the *Lutheran Book of Worship* where appropriate. But, again, the use of these materials is not for the purpose of acceptance or rejection of the document but for receiving it by seeing how it expresses the faith of the Church through the ages and what guidance it gives to Lutherans.

The final study session will take up the other two questions asked in the Preface: 1) What are the consequences that can be drawn from this text for the Lutheran Church and its relations and dialogues with other churches, particularly those churches which also recognize the text as an expression of the apostolic faith? and, 2) What suggestions can be made for the ongoing work of Faith and Order as it relates the material of this text on *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* to its long-range research project, "Towards the Common Expression of the Apostolic Faith Today?" The answers which your study group has for these two questions are to be sent to the headquarters of the Association of Evangelical Lutheran Churches so that your input plays a part in the official response of the church called for by the Faith and Order Commission. The address is AELC Suite 80LL, 12015 Manchester Rd., St. Louis, MO, 63131.

Discussion Questions

1. Review again the history that led to the production of *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*. Then state how you understand the nature of the document and what it claims to be.
2. Since it is an historic "first" to ask the churches to "receive" a document like *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*, an explanation of the process is difficult. How do you understand what it means to "receive" the text? What does it **not** mean? It is vital to have an agreement by the group on what is meant by "receiving" the text since that will affect the

way in which the document is studied in the sessions to follow.

3. The framers of *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* believe that the Holy Spirit has led the churches to this time (*kairos*) of theological agreement and that many advances are possible. What do you think about that statement?



SESSION TWO

Baptism

(Reading: *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*, Baptism, Parts I & II, Pages 7-10)

I. The Institution of Baptism

Baptism is incorporation into Christ, entry into the New Covenant, gift of God, commanded by the Lord and practiced by the churches "as a rite of commitment to the Lord who bestows his grace upon his people," according to *BEM* (hereafter, *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* will be referred to as *BEM*).

In what other ways would you want to describe Baptism? Luther asks:

What is Baptism? Answer: Baptism is not merely water, but it is water used according to God's command and connected with God's Word. What is this Word of God? Answer: As recorded in Matthew 28:19, our Lord Christ said, "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. (Small Catechism, Baptism, Paragraphs 1-4)

How does this statement from the Lutheran Confessions agree with or differ from *BEM*?

II. The Meaning of Baptism

The variety of images given in Paragraph 2, Page 7, in

BEM attests to the richness of Baptism. Read each of the passages given in the paragraph to gain a fuller appreciation of the richness of the New Testament imagery.

The Lutheran Confessions, however, reflect a limited number of the New Testament images. Luther says:

What gifts or benefits does Baptism bestow?

Answer: It effects forgiveness of sin, delivers from death and the devil, and grants eternal salvation to all who believe, as the Word and promise of God declare. What is this Word and promise of God? Answer: As recorded in Mark 16:16, our Lord Christ said, "He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned." (Small Catechism, Baptism, Paragraphs 5-8)

With what images from Paragraph 2 of *BEM* does this explanation most closely correspond?

A. Participation in Christ's Death and Resurrection

The most important passage for this prominent image of Baptism in the New Testament is Romans 6:3-11. Read it again. The Small Catechism makes use of that passage under Baptism when the question is asked:

What does such baptizing with water signify?

Answer: It signifies that the old Adam in us, together with all sins and evil lusts, should be drowned by daily sorrow and repentance and be put to death, and that the new man should come forth daily and rise up, cleansed and righteous, to live forever in God's presence. Where is this written? Answer: In Romans 6:4, St. Paul wrote, "We were buried therefore with him by Baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life." (Small Catechism, Baptism, Paragraphs 11-14)

In what ways does this statement agree with or differ from what *BEM* says in this section on Baptism?

B. Conversion, Pardoning and Cleansing

This paragraph extends the thought of the preceding one. Read the Scripture passages mentioned in the paragraph — Hebrews 10:22, I Peter 3:21, Acts 22:16 and I Corinthians 6:11 — and note what each emphasizes in relation to Baptism. On the basis of your study do you agree that Baptism gives a new

ethical orientation to the baptized person? If so, what is new about that orientation?

C. Gift of the Spirit

This paragraph in *BEM* states that the Spirit works in the lives of people before, in and after Baptism. Compare the explanation of the Third Article in the Small Catechism:

The Holy Spirit has called me through the Gospel, enlightened me with his gifts, and sanctified and preserved me in the true faith, just as he calls, gathers, enlightens and sanctifies the whole Christian Church on earth and preserves it in union with Jesus Christ in the one true faith. (Small Catechism, Creed, Paragraph 6)

How does this affirm the *BEM* statement? *BEM* goes on to say that the Spirit is the seal of the inheritance to come. How do II Corinthians 1:21-22 and Ephesians 1:13-14 speak of the role of the Spirit? Compare this with the question from the Small Catechism:

How can water produce such great effects?

Answer: It is not the water that produces these effects, but the Word of God connected with the water, and our faith which relies on the Word of God connected with the water. For without the Word of God, the water is merely water and no Baptism. But when connected with the Word of God it is a Baptism, that is, a gracious water of life and a washing of regeneration in the Holy Spirit, as St. Paul wrote to Titus (3:5-8), "He saved us by the washing of regeneration and renewal in the Holy Spirit, which he poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that we might be justified by his grace and become heirs in hope of eternal life. The saying is sure." (Small Catechism, Baptism, Paragraphs 9-10)

Does this relate to the *BEM* statement on the role of the Spirit?

D. Incorporation into the Body of Christ

Baptism brings Christians into the body of Christ and unites them in one Lord. Read Ephesians 4:4-16 for a powerful description of that unity. Do you agree that baptismal unity is a call to the churches to overcome their divisions? Note Commentary 6, Page 9, *BEM*. Have Lutherans recognized

the Baptism of other Christian churches? Have they allowed differences of sex, race or social status to divide the Body of Christ? If so, how?

E. The Sign of the Kingdom

This paragraph states that Baptism is a sign of the Kingdom of God and of the life of the world to come. There are no Bible passages listed to support the statement. How did the drafters of *BEM* arrive at that conclusion and is it a justifiable one? Why?

“Reception” Questions

1. Does the *BEM* presentation thus far represent the faith of the Church through the ages? Why or why not?

2. What guidance has the *BEM* discussion on Baptism offered to Lutherans up to this point?

(It would be well for the group to appoint someone to record the answers given to these questions. Each session will end with similar questions. The group will want to tally and summarize the responses at the end of the study in order to pass them along to the church headquarters.)

SESSION THREE

Baptism

(Reading: *BEM*, Baptism, Parts III and IV, Pages 10-14)

III. Baptism and Faith

Baptism is God's gift but faith is necessary for the salvation embodied and set forth in Baptism, states *BEM* in Paragraph 8. Compare this to Article XIII in the Augsburg Confession on The Use of the Sacraments:

It is taught among us that the sacraments were instituted not only to be signs by which people might be identified outwardly as Christians, but that they are signs and testimonies of God's will toward us for the purpose of awakening and strengthening our faith. For this reason they require faith, and they are rightly used when they are received in faith and for the purpose of strengthening faith. (Augsburg Confession XIII, Paragraphs 1-2)

Note the strong emphasis on faith in God's promise, an emphasis less noticeable in *BEM*.

Life-long growth is an implication of Baptism. Read Ephesians 4:13-16. What is the goal envisioned by the author of the passage?

While living and growing, baptized Christians spend their lives in witness and service in the Church and the world. What sort of life for the baptized Christian is spelled out in Romans 6:9-14; Galatians 3:27-28 and I Peter 2:21-4:6? How can Lutherans encourage one another to live such lives of service and witness?

IV. Baptismal practice

A. Baptism of Believers and Infants

Do you agree with the statement of *BEM*, Paragraph 11, that "Baptism upon personal profession of faith is the most clearly attested pattern in the New Testament documents?" Lutherans, of course, baptize both professing adults and infants. Article IX of the Augsburg Confession states, "It is taught among us that Baptism is necessary and that grace is offered through it. Children, too, should be baptized, for in Baptism they are committed to God and become acceptable to him." (Augsburg Confession IX, Paragraphs 1-2) This article emphasizes God's action in Baptism. But what of the faith of an infant? For an interesting discussion on Infant Baptism and faith, read Luther in his Large Catechism, Baptism, Paragraphs 47-86, especially Paragraph 57. What reason does Luther finally settle on as the basic reason for baptizing infants?

BEM notes in Paragraph 12 that a person baptized as an infant or later in life must grow in an understanding of the faith. Christian nurture is vital. To what extent has your Lutheran community provided opportunity for nurture within an environment of witness and service? Note Commentary 12, Page 11, *BEM* where it states, "A rediscovery of the continuing character of Christian nurture may facilitate the mutual acceptance of different initiation practices." Can Lutherans accept a believer-baptist tradition? Why or why not?

B. Baptism, Chrismation, Confirmation

Christians differ, states *BEM*, as to where the sign of the gift of the Spirit is to be found in connection with Baptism. Look at the *Lutheran Book of Worship*, Holy Baptism, 14, and note how the gift of the Spirit is signified in that rite. Then look carefully at Affirmation of Baptism, Rubric 16, Page 201, in *Lutheran Book of Worship* to see how the gift of the Spirit given in Baptism is "stirred up" and faith "confirmed." How does this close tie with Baptism change some of the traditional understandings of Confirmation? And look at the question raised about Confirmation in Commentary 14b, Page 13, *BEM*. "Those churches which baptize children but refuse them a share in the Eucharist before such a rite (i.e. Instruction for First Communion or Confirmation) may wish to ponder whether they have fully appreciated and accepted the consequences of Baptism." What is your response to that challenge? Should baptized infants be communed? Why or why not?

C. Towards Mutual Recognition of Baptism

"Mutual recognition of Baptism is acknowledged as an important sign and means of expressing the baptismal unity given in Christ," says *BEM* in Paragraph 15. Do Lutherans recognize the validity of Baptism in other Christian churches or do they insist on re-baptizing?

Do Lutherans baptize indiscriminately? If so, how can they guard against the practice of apparently indiscriminate Baptism and take more seriously their responsibility for the nurture of baptized children to mature commitment to Christ?

"Reception" Questions

1. Has the continuing discussion of Baptism by *BEM* represented the faith of the Church through the ages?
2. What further guidance has the discussion offered to Lutherans?



SESSION FOUR

Baptism

(Reading: *BEM*, Baptism, Part V, Page 14-16)

V. The Celebration of Baptism

The symbolic dimension of water in Baptism can be enhanced by immersing people in water (Paragraph 18). Going down into the water and coming up out of it is a sign of death and resurrection. Can Lutherans baptize by immersion? Why or why not? Luther says of Baptism in the Large Catechism:

This act or observance consists in being dipped into the water, which covers us completely, and being drawn out again. These two parts, being dipped under water and emerging from it, indicate the power and effect of Baptism, which is simply the slaying of the old Adam and the resurrection of the new man, both of which actions must continue in us our whole life long. (Large Catechism, Baptism, Paragraph 65)

Is Luther implying Baptism by immersion? Why don't Lutherans immerse?

The liturgy of Baptism is enriched by vivid signs, states *BEM*, Paragraph 19. Look at Holy Baptism in *Lutheran Book of Worship*, Pages 121-125, and search for signs that enrich the rite. What signs do you find? What other signs could be added?

Note the list of elements that *BEM* says are to be included in a baptismal rite. Compare that list to the elements you find in Holy Baptism, *Lutheran Book of Worship*. What elements, if any, are missing and what elements does *LBW*

have that *BEM* does not mention?

Does *LBW* explain the meaning of Baptism within the rite as Paragraph 21 of *BEM* says it should? And does the rite of Holy Baptism in *LBW* assume that it will take place in public worship? If so how is the worshipping congregation included in the rite? Does this exclude private Baptism? Why or why not? Does your Lutheran community baptize at the time of the great festivals of Easter, Pentecost and Epiphany? How could it arrange to do so?

“Reception” Questions

1. Has *BEM* throughout its presentation on Baptism reflected the faith of the Church through the ages?
2. Can you add to and summarize the items that offer guidance to Lutheran churches regarding Baptism?



SESSION FIVE

Eucharist

(Reading: *BEM*, Eucharist, Parts I - IIB, Page 17-21)

I. The Institution of the Eucharist

The institution of the Eucharist is recorded in four places — I Corinthians 11:23-25; Matthew 26:26-29; Mark 14:22-25; and Luke 22:14-20. Read through these accounts noting similarities and differences. If possible, do so with a book like *Gospel Parallels* (New York: Thomas Nelson Inc., 1949) which puts the texts side-by-side.

Note that *BEM* stresses the importance of meals, not only in Jesus' life-time, but in the whole history of God's people — past, present and future. The Eucharist is pre-figured in the Passover meal of Exodus 12 and the meal of the Covenant in Exodus 24. It is the meal of the New Covenant, a covenant established in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ and celebrated by Christians through the ages as they look forward to participation in the Supper of the Lamb in Revelation 19:9. Why is a meal — eating and drinking together — such a powerful action and/or symbol?

II. The Meaning of the Eucharist

The text says, "The Eucharist is essentially the sacrament of the gift which God makes to us in Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit." The gift of salvation is given to all

communing Christians, relating them to Christ and renewing them personally. Every baptized and communing person receives forgiveness of sins and the pledge of eternal life. It is this latter benefit which the Lutheran Confessions emphasize. In the Small Catechism, in answer to the question, "What is the benefit of such eating and drinking?" Luther answers: "We are told in the words 'for you' and 'for the forgiveness of sins.' By these words the forgiveness of sins, life and salvation are given to us in the sacrament, for where there is forgiveness of sins, there are also life and salvation." (Small Catechism, Sacrament of the Altar, Paragraphs 5-6) Why, do you suppose, in view of the many ways in which the Eucharist can be understood, the Lutheran Confessions focus on forgiveness of sins, life and salvation? How can Lutherans have their view of the Eucharist expanded?

A. The Eucharist as Thanksgiving to the Father

The word Eucharist is based on the Greek word for thanksgiving. The name highlights the thanksgiving offered to God for all he has done in creation, redemption and sanctification and will continue to do until the end of time. Go back to the Biblical accounts of the institution of the Eucharist in I Corinthians, Matthew, Mark and Luke and note how often Jesus gave thanks.

Look at the Great Thanksgiving in *Lutheran Book of Worship*, Page 68 ff., to note how Lutherans voice the sacrifice of praise noted in Paragraph 4 of *BEM*. To what extent does the Great Thanksgiving carry out what *BEM* says is intended by a sacrifice of praise?

B. The Eucharist as Anamnesis or Memorial of Christ

Lutherans have tended to be wary of the word "memorial" in reference to the Eucharist. It seems to connote a "memory" of Christ from the past without a "presence" of Christ in the present. However, Jesus did say, "Do this in remembrance of me." And *BEM* goes on to say in Paragraphs 5 and 6 that the Biblical view of memorial does mean the presence of Christ. Can Lutherans understand the Eucharist as memorial. Why or why not?

Lutherans also have been suspicious of any attempt to define the Eucharist as a re-sacrificing of Christ, insisting that his death on the cross was a once-for-all-time event that cannot be repeated. Paragraph 8 of *BEM* agrees that the Christ event was unique and cannot be repeated. But it goes

on to say that in the Eucharist, the Church joins with Christ the Great High Priest in interceding for the world, beseeching God to grant Christ's benefit to every human being. Note how this is included in *Lutheran Book of Worship*, 31, Page 70. Can Lutherans agree that such intercession is valid? And does Commentary 8 in *BEM*, Page 20, help in understanding what Roman Catholics mean when they speak of "propitiatory sacrifice?"

A third element that has historically been a point of contention for Lutherans in the Eucharist is the real presence of Christ. There has been disagreement with Roman Catholics who teach that bread and wine turn into body and blood. And, there has been disagreement with the Reformed teaching that there is **only** bread and wine present in the Eucharist. The Lutheran teaching is stated in Article X of the Augsburg Confession: "It is taught among us that the true body and blood of Christ are really present in the Supper of our Lord under the form of bread and wine and are there distributed and received." (Augsburg Confession X, Paragraphs 1-2) The answer in the Small Catechism to the question, "What is the Sacrament of the Altar?" is "Instituted by Christ himself, it is the true body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, under the bread and wine, given for us Christians to eat and to drink." (Small Catechism, Sacrament of the Altar, Paragraphs 1-2)

BEM, in Paragraph 13, attempts a "convergence" as stated in Commentary 13, Page 21. Read Paragraph 13 very carefully and note that it sums up its teaching about the presence of Christ with: "The Church confesses Christ's real, living and active presence in the Eucharist." How is that good news for Lutherans?

Note also the last sentence of Paragraph 13 and compare it with the Small Catechism's answer to the question, "Who, then, receives this sacrament worthily?" "... he is truly worthy and well prepared who believes these words: 'for you' and 'for the forgiveness of sins.' On the other hand, he who does not believe these words, or doubts them, is unworthy and unprepared, for the words 'for you' require believing hearts." (Small Catechism, Sacrament of the Altar, Paragraphs 9-10) How does the statement from the Small Catechism agree with or differ from *BEM*?

“Reception” Questions

1. Does the *BEM* presentation of the Eucharist represent the faith of the Church through the ages?
2. Has the discussion of the Eucharist up to this point offered any guidance to Lutherans?



SESSION SIX

Eucharist

(Reading: *BEM*, Eucharist, Parts IIC-IIE, Pages 21-25)

A. The Eucharist as Invocation of the Spirit

The concept of the Eucharist as invocation of the Spirit is not a familiar one to many Lutherans. The concept stresses "the role of the Holy Spirit as that of the one who makes the historical words of Jesus present and alive . . . The Church prays to the Father for the gift of the Holy Spirit in order that the Eucharistic event may be a reality." (*BEM*, Paragraph 14, Page 21) Note that Commentary 14, Page 22, says that the invocation of the Spirit is located differently in the various liturgical traditions. Look carefully at its location in the *Lutheran Book of Worship*, 31, Page 70, where it begins with the words, "Send now, we pray, your Holy Spirit . . ." Since it is included in Lutheran worship, how can this concept become a more familiar and enriching one for Lutherans?

D. The Eucharist as Communion of the Faithful

Eucharist as Holy Communion is very familiar to Lutherans. Celebration of the Eucharist is a union with Christ, with each other in the local community of believers and with the whole Church. Therefore, as *BEM* says in Paragraph 19, each community of Christians should be aware of and concerned about other churches. But Commentary 19 cautions against a critical concern about other church bodies that

calls into question the validity of their celebration of the Eucharist. Do Lutherans do that? Why or why not?

Reconciliation is the key concept of Paragraph 20. There is to be reconciliation among all who celebrate the Eucharist. Examine the passages listed to see what they say about the need for reconciliation — Matthew 5:23f.; I Corinthians 10:16f.; I Corinthians 11:20-22; and Galatians 3:28. But notice that *BEM* goes further and says that all who participate in the Eucharist are involved in the central event of the world's history — the reconciling work of God in Jesus Christ — and thus are to be involved in working for reconciliation in all the world. How can Lutherans become more involved in working for reconciliation?

The third paragraph states that participation in the Eucharist relates Christians to the servanthood of Christ and calls them to serve the poor and needy. How can Lutherans gain greater understanding and more effective ways of linking Eucharist and service?

E. The Eucharist as Meal of the Kingdom.

This aspect of the Eucharist emphasizes the present and ongoing Kingdom of God as it breaks in upon the world. Signs of its presence are here, but Christians look forward to its coming in fullness when they shall celebrate with their Lord in the Father's Kingdom. Look at Matthew 26:29 and I Corinthians 11:26 for the way in which the Bible expresses this (Paragraph 22).

The final paragraph in this section stresses the empowerment of Christians through the Eucharist for witness in the world. Christians, therefore, need to be nourished for their task by regular participation in the Eucharist. And, *BEM* says, they need to be aware that their witness is weakened when they cannot unite in the celebration of the Eucharist. Is that true? Why?

"Reception" Questions

1. Discuss and record how these sections on the Eucharist express the faith of the Church through the ages.

2. Think through and write down suggestions for Lutherans in regard to the Eucharist.

SESSION SEVEN

Eucharist

(Reading: *BEM*, Eucharist, Part III, Pages 25-28)

III. The Celebration of the Eucharist

This section begins with a list of elements which *BEM* says should be included in a celebration of the Eucharist. Compare this list with the elements included in Setting One of Holy Communion, *Lutheran Book of Worship*, Pages 57-76. What elements are not included in the *Lutheran Book of Worship*? What elements, if any, are in the *Lutheran Book of Worship* that are not in *BEM*?

Paragraph 28 suggests that churches should renew Eucharistic appreciation through an examination of liturgical teaching and practice. Lutherans using the *Lutheran Book of Worship* have just done that! But more study needs to be done as Commentary 28, Page 26, indicates. What are the unchangeable essentials for the Eucharist?

Are ordained ministers the only ones who can preside at a Eucharistic celebration for Lutherans? Paragraph 29 indicates that an ordained person presides at the Eucharist in most churches because that person signifies the Eucharist is a gift from God and not the possession of the assembly and that person also expresses the connection with other Christian communities. Do you agree with that assumption?

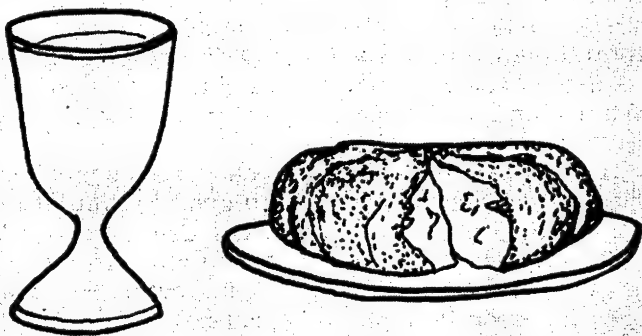
How often is the Eucharist celebrated in your worshiping community (Paragraph 30)? Should it be every Sunday? And how are the Christians in your church encouraged to partake frequently (Paragraph 31)?

Do Lutherans ordinarily reserve the elements? Why or why not? Lutherans have traditionally stressed that Christ is present only in the eating and drinking. Yet, unused consecrated elements should be treated with respect. How does your church treat such elements?

“Reception” Questions

1. Has this last section on the Eucharist expressed the faith of the Church through the ages? Add these comments to your previous ones and sum up your opinions.

2. What additional guidance has this last section given to Lutherans regarding the Eucharist? Sum up all of your suggestions.



SESSION EIGHT

Ministry

(Reading: *BEM*, Ministry, Part I, Pages 29-31)

I. The Calling of the Whole People of God

The first three paragraphs of this section focus on the work of God, Christ and the Holy Spirit in the calling and sustaining of the whole people of God. The first paragraph emphasizes that God has called a new community into being through the work of Jesus Christ and unites it to himself in the Spirit. This new community is brought into being and sustained by the Gospel and the sacraments. Article V of the Augsburg Confession calls this work of God the "office of the ministry." "To obtain such faith God instituted the office of the ministry, that is, provided the Gospel and the sacraments." (Augsburg Confession V, Paragraph 1) For the reformers, the on-going use of Gospel and sacraments is the essence of the ministry. Without that, there is no Church. But with an on-going use of Gospel and sacraments there is a continued calling and empowering of the people of God.

The second paragraph speaks of the centrality of Jesus Christ for the life of the Church. The Lutheran Confessions say the same thing. Article IV of the Augsburg Confession, sometimes called the heart of the Confessions, says:

It is also taught among us that we cannot obtain forgiveness of sin and righteousness before God by our own merits, works, or satisfactions, but that we receive forgiveness of sin and become righteous before God by grace,

for Christ's sake, through faith, when we believe that Christ suffered and died for us and that for his sake our sin is forgiven and righteousness and eternal life are given to us. (Augsburg Confession IV, Paragraphs 1-2)

In Christ, the people of God have a new life of forgiveness, freedom and love.

The third paragraph focuses on the work of the Spirit. The Spirit calls people to faith, sanctifies them through many gifts, gives them strength to witness to the Gospel, and empowers them to serve in faith and love. The paragraph echoes Article V of the Augsburg Confession where it is said that through the Gospel and sacraments God "gives the Holy Spirit, who works faith, when and where he pleases, in those who hear the Gospel." (Augsburg Confession V, Paragraph 2) And it also echoes Luther's explanation of the Third Article in the Small Catechism where he says:

The Holy Spirit has called me by the Gospel, enlightened me with his gifts, and sanctified and kept me in true faith, just as he calls, gathers, enlightens and sanctifies the whole Christian Church on earth and preserves it in union with Jesus Christ in the one true faith. (Small Catechism, Creed, Paragraph 6)

The people of God are called to proclaim and prefigure the Kingdom of God, says *BEM* in the fourth paragraph. The Kingdom of God came among us through the works which Christ did. Read the account in Luke 4:16-19 where Jesus recounts the works he was called to do. God's people are also to be involved in such witness and service. In what ways can your community of Christians proclaim the in-breaking of the Kingdom of God?

The next paragraph, the fifth, speaks of the diversity of gifts which the Holy Spirit gives to the people of God. Read Romans 12:3-8; I Corinthians 12:4-31; and Ephesians 4:11-16 for detailed commentary on the rich diversity of gifts which God has given to his people and the way in which they are to be used. All members of the Church are called to discover the gifts they have and to use them in building the Church and serving in the world. How can Christians in your worshipping community be helped to discover their gifts and put them to use?

In the final paragraph, *BEM* notes that the churches are agreed on the calling of the whole people of God but they differ on how the life of the Church is to be ordered. It says that an answer must be found to the question: "How, according to the will of God and under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, is the life of the Church to be understood and ordered so that the Gospel may be spread and the community built up in love?"

As we go on in this study and attempt to find answers to that question, it is well for Lutherans to remember Article VII of the Augsburg Confession:

For it is sufficient for the true unity of the Christian Church that the Gospel be preached in conformity with a pure understanding of it and that the sacraments be administered in accordance with the divine Word. It is not necessary for the true unity of the Christian Church that ceremonies, instituted by men, should be observed uniformly in all places. (Augsburg Confession VII, Paragraphs 1-3)

What implications does this have for the degree of uniformity or flexibility which Lutherans might expect when determining the forms of ministry?

"Reception" Questions

1. To what extent has *BEM* expressed the faith of the Church through the ages in this section on ministry?
2. What guidance for Lutherans have you discovered in this section?



SESSION NINE

Ministry

(Reading: *BEM*, Ministry, Part II, Pages 31-37)

II. The Church and the Ordained Ministry

A. The Ordained Ministry

Note carefully the definitions on Page 31.

The first paragraph states that a public ministry, usually that of ordained persons, is indispensable for the life of the Church. Is that claim true? Is it possible that the Church can function when everyone is equally responsible for all functions and there is no differentiation?

The next argument supporting ordained ministry is the historical precedent of the choosing of the Twelve by Christ (Paragraph 9). Do you agree that that is a valid argument for the continued choosing of persons for public ministry? Of course, as *BEM* notes, the ministry of the Twelve was unique and unrepeatable. Therefore, the ministry of persons ordained later is different than that of the apostles (Paragraph 10).

The ministry of ordained persons today is characterized in Paragraph 11 by the functions: herald and ambassador, leader and teacher, and pastor. Would you state the functions of ordained ministry in a different way? How and why? Note Commentary 11 (Page 32) which points out the diversity of forms of ministry.

The ordained ministry and the believing community are interrelated and mutually dependent, states *BEM* in Para-

graph 12. Lutherans may want to look at Article XIV of the Augsburg Confession in connection with this paragraph:

It is taught among us that nobody should publicly teach or preach or administer the sacraments in the Church without a regular call.

(Augsburg Confession XIV, Paragraph 1)

The Lutheran Confessions assume: 1) that there needs to be a divinely instituted ministry of Word and sacrament in the midst of the believing community; and 2) that persons are called to perform that function by the believing community. Ministry and community exist together and are mutually interdependent.

But, though *BEM* in Paragraphs 13 and 14 stresses the functions of the ordained ministry, it cautions in Commentary 13 that public ministry does not take away the ministry of every member of the people of God. How can your community of believers avoid the assumption that the ordained minister performs the entire ministry of the congregation and continue to stress the ministry of every believer?

B. Ordained Ministry and Authority

The ordained person must remember that the authority of the office is rooted in Jesus Christ and that ordination is not a personal possession. It is given by God and bestowed by the congregation for the good of the people of God (Paragraph 15). Therefore, the ordained ministry is to be modeled after the ministry of Christ as one who committed his life to the good of God's people (Paragraph 16). Do you think that *BEM* has succeeded in defining the source and importance of authority and its responsible use? Why or why not?

C. Ordained Ministry and Priesthood

BEM carefully spells out the New Testament warrant for the priesthood of Jesus and the priesthood of all believers. Then it notes in Paragraph 17 and the related commentary that ordained ministers can be called priests in a derivative way because they perform priestly functions. Do you agree that there is a strong enough case for calling ordained persons "priests"? What title do you prefer? Are you open to the use of the term "priest" by other church bodies?

D. The Ministry of Men and Women in the Church

The issue of whether or not women should be ordained is

discussed in this section. The churches agree on the importance of the ministry of women as members of the Christian community but disagree on ordaining them. Read Commentary 18 (Page 36) very carefully and note the argument set forth there for the ordination of women. Is it a sufficient argument? How would you change or expand it? Read the argument set forth by some **against** the ordination of women? Are there sufficient reasons given? How would you change or expand the argument against ordination of women?

"Reception" Questions

1. Has the faith of the Church through the ages been expressed in this section of *BEM*? Why or why not?
2. Have you found any guidance for Lutherans in this section? What is it?



SESSION TEN

Ministry

(Reading: *BEM*, Ministry, Part III, Pages 37-42)

III. The Forms of the Ordained Ministry

A. Bishops, Presbyters and Deacons

BEM notes that the three-fold pattern of bishop, presbyter and deacon emerged as the pattern of ordained ministry during the second and third centuries (Paragraph 19). Times of crisis in the Church brought changes in the structure. What crises shaped the order of ordained ministry in Lutheran churches? Why is the congregational pattern predominant in the United States while the episcopal pattern predominates in European, especially Scandinavian, Lutheran churches?

The earliest pattern of the three-fold ministry was in the local eucharistic community with the bishop as leader of the congregation, assisted by presbyters and deacons (Paragraph 20). But the roles changed through time with the bishop assuming oversight (episkope) of several congregations, the deacons assisting the bishop and the presbyters serving as leaders (or pastors) of local congregations (Paragraph 21). However, Commentary 21 points out that the New Testament contains a diversity of patterns with no single one predominating.

Admitting there has been a diversity of forms of ministry in the Church, *BEM* nonetheless argues that the "three-fold ministry of bishop, presbyter and deacon may serve today as

an expression of the unity we seek and also as a means for achieving it." (Paragraph 22) The first basis for the argument is historical. The three-fold form of ministry has historical precedent. The second argument is functional. The churches need people to perform the diaconal, presbyteral and episcopal functions. Do you agree with the historical and/or functional arguments? Why?

The argument of Paragraph 23 is that the ministry of the bishop is needed to express and safeguard the unity of the body of Christ. The Lutheran Confessions agree with the need for bishops and their function of oversight. However, when bishops go beyond their divinely ordained functions, the Confessions state that they are not to be obeyed. Article XXVIII of the Augsburg Confession says:

According to divine right, therefore, it is the office of bishop to preach the Gospel, forgive sins, judge doctrine and condemn doctrine that is contrary to the Gospel, and exclude from the Christian community the ungodly whose wicked conduct is manifest. All this is to be done not by human power but by God's Word alone. On this account parish ministers and churches are bound to be obedient to the bishops according to the saying of Christ in Luke 10:16, "He who hears you hears me." On the other hand, if they teach, introduce or institute anything contrary to the Gospel, we have God's command not to be obedient in such cases, for Christ says in Matthew 7:15, "Beware of false prophets." (Augsburg Confession XXVIII, Paragraphs 21-23)

In churches retaining the three-fold form of ministry there often is need for reform, states Paragraph 24. Yet churches which do not have the three-fold form should consider adopting it (Paragraph 25). Should Lutherans accept the three-fold form and shape their ministry in that pattern? Why or why not?

B. Guiding Principles for the Exercise of the Ordained Ministry in the Church

The ordained ministry should be exercised in a personal, collegial and communal way (Paragraph 26). The personal is needed because the Gospel is best proclaimed by a pastoral person in the midst of the congregation. The person, however, should not act autocratically in regard to the community but facilitate communal participation in the work of the Church. Nor should the individual pastor function in isolation

from a collegial group of other ordained ministers. How can Lutheran churches be structured both as individual parishes and groups of parishes so that the personal, communal and collegial aspects of ministry are carried out (Paragraph 27)?

C. Functions of Bishops, Presbyters and Deacons

Bishops are pastoral ministers of oversight (episkope) and represent continuity and unity in the Church (Paragraph 29). Presbyters are ministers of Word and sacrament in the local congregation (Paragraph 30). Deacons show the interdependence between worship and service by assisting in worship and serving the needs of people (Paragraph 31). Commentary 31 states that there is a great deal of uncertainty about the office of deacon. But, should it be adopted, a number of present ministries might well be united in this office. If Lutherans were to adopt the office of deacon, what present ministries could be included in the diaconate?

D. Variety of Charisms

Even while making a case for the restoration of the three-fold form of ministry, *BEM* wants to make certain that other ministries are not hindered but enhanced (Paragraph 32) and that the churches remain open to special ministries that may be needed in times of reform and renewal (Paragraph 33). How is it possible to do this?

“Reception” Questions

1. In what ways has this section on ministry expressed the faith of the Church through the ages?
2. Have you discovered any guidance for the way in which Lutherans might order their ministries?



SESSION ELEVEN

Ministry

(Reading: *BEM*, Ministry, Parts IV-VI, Pages 43-50)

IV. Succession in the Apostolic Tradition

Apostolic tradition is defined in Paragraph 35 as "continuity in the permanent characteristics of the Church of the apostles." The paragraph goes on to list those characteristics. Would you change that list in any way? How?

Apostolic succession is essentially the passing on of apostolic tradition. The ordained ministry helps pass that on and thus the orderly transmission of the ordained ministry is important for the Church (Paragraph 35). How have Lutherans provided for an orderly transmission of the ordained ministry?

In the early Church, the passing on of the apostolic tradition was centered in the office of bishop and the succession of bishops (Paragraph 36). The Lutheran Confessions acknowledge the historical function of bishops in passing on the apostolic tradition through the ordaining of pastors, but they also point out why the practice was interrupted at the time of the Reformation. In the 1537 "Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope," the confessors say:

Afterwards one thing made a distinction between the bishops and pastors, and this was ordination, for it was decided that one bishop should ordain the ministers in a number of churches. But since the distinction between bishop and pastor is not by divine right, it is manifest that ordination administered by a pastor in his own church is valid by divine

right. Consequently, when the regular bishops become enemies of the Gospel and are unwilling to administer ordination, the churches retain the right to ordain for themselves. For wherever the Church exists, the right to administer the Gospel also exists. Wherefore it is necessary for the Church to retain the right of calling, electing and ordaining ministers. (Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope, Paragraphs 64-67)

Paragraph 37 of *BEM* indicates that in churches without episcopal succession, ordination is done by persons whom the church recognizes as having the authority to transmit the ministerial commission. How is this done in Lutheran churches?

BEM suggests in Paragraph 38 that churches are expressing a willingness to accept episcopal succession as a sign of the apostolicity of life of the whole Church. Is your study group willing to accept episcopal succession as such a sign?

V. Ordination

A. The Meaning of Ordination

Ordination to the ministry is a) in the name of Christ; b) by the invocation of the Spirit; and c) the laying on of hands. What does each of these actions signify according to Paragraph 39? Would you agree with Commentary 39 (Page 46) that it may be best to have the bishop do the ordaining?

Note the concise definition of ordination in Paragraph 40. But Commentary 40 points out that there have been two different interpretations of ordination. One is the Greek notion of appointment, and the other is the Roman notion of special status. With which of these two views would you agree?

B. The Act of Ordination

The act of ordination has three aspects: 1) Invocation of the Holy Spirit (Paragraph 42); 2) Sacramental sign (Paragraph 43); and 3) Acknowledgement of gifts and commitment (Paragraph 44). Most Lutherans would agree with 1) and 3), but do not normally call ordination a sacrament as does 2). After a careful study of Paragraph 43, can you understand how *BEM* sees ordination as sacramental? If you have available a copy of the new Rite of Ordination, your group could determine how that rite includes all three aspects. The rite is found in *Occasional Services: A Companion to the Lutheran Book of Worship*.

C. The Conditions for Ordination

There are no universally prescribed conditions for ordination. In whatever manner a person is "called" to ministry, the call must be authenticated by the Church's recognition of the gifts of the person (Paragraph 45). Persons called to ordained ministry may be married or celibate, fully salaried by the church or earn a salary elsewhere (Paragraph 46) and come from any race or sociological group (Paragraph 50). The type of training for ministry is also not prescribed, but it should be appropriate for the ministry the person is to perform (Paragraph 48). The different conditions for ordination in the various churches should not cause a church to judge the ordination of other churches as invalid (Paragraph 49). What conditions for ordination do Lutherans ordinarily have? Would you propose any changes? If so, what would they be?

VI. Towards the Mutual Recognition of the Ordained Ministries

One of the primary issues is that of apostolic succession. The essence of the matter is the transmission of the ministry of Word and sacrament in continuity with apostolic times (Paragraph 52). The manner in which the transmission occurs is different in episcopal and non-episcopal churches. In the United States, at least, Lutheran churches do not have episcopal succession. *BEM* suggests that Lutherans may need to recover the sign of episcopal succession (Paragraph 53b). Do you agree with *BEM* on that point? Why? Should the difference between the churches in the matter of ordination of men and women be a hindrance to unity (Paragraph 54)? In the event a time comes when churches want to mutually recognize their ministries, what public act would you think most appropriate for such recognition (Paragraph 55)?

"Reception" Questions

1. How do these concluding sections on ministry reflect the faith of the Church through the ages?
2. Is there any further guidance for Lutherans regarding the ordained ministry?

SESSION TWELVE

Your Response

This is the session in which the study group brings together all of its observations, opinions and suggestions. There are four tasks to be accomplished:

A. The Faith of the Church

The group should summarize opinions on the way in which *BEM* reflects the faith of the Church through the ages. Have the person or persons who have been recording the comments session-by-session attempt a summary. The group can then discuss whether it represents the group's thinking.

B. Guidance to Lutherans

The same process should be followed for summarizing the session-by-session suggestions that serve as guides to Lutherans.

C. Ecumenical Relations

Now the study group should return to the question in Session One from *BEM*, Page 9. "What are the consequences that can be drawn from this text for the Lutheran Church and its relations and dialogues with other churches, particularly with those churches which also recognize *BEM* as an expression of the apostolic faith?" The study group should discuss

this question and agree on the consequences so that these observations also may be passed on to the Church.

D. Suggestions for Faith and Order

The other question deferred from the opening session is: "What suggestions can be made for the ongoing work of Faith and Order as it relates the material of this text on Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry to its long-range project 'Towards a Common Expression of the Apostolic Faith Today'?" The Faith and Order Commission is working on a way to state the Christian faith that is faithful to the apostolic faith and acceptable to the churches. A great deal of discussion has centered around the Nicene Creed and its adequacy as an expression of the apostolic faith for today. What suggestions, arising from your study of *BEM*, does your study group have for the formulation of such a common confession?

When these four tasks are accomplished mail the results to your church headquarters.

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